

This public information brochure is a synopsis of various research materials related to *Krause Music Store*, prepared for the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks by its staff.



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# Krause Music Store



Commission on Chicago  
Historical and Architectural Landmarks



(Barbara Crane, photographer)

**KRAUSE MUSIC STORE**  
4611 North Lincoln Avenue

William Presto, architect  
Louis Sullivan, associate architect

Completed 1922

Elaborate relief ornament decorates the unusual facade of the building at 4611 North Lincoln Avenue, setting it apart from the other more conventional store fronts of the neighborhood. The building is known as the Krause Music Store, although it has been used as a funeral home since 1929. It was commissioned in 1921 by William P. Krause who selected his neighbor, the architect William Presto, to design a store with a second-floor apartment for the Krause family. Presto's work primarily involved ordinary, low-rise, flat-fronted stores, but he was determined that the exterior of Krause's store be different. For the design of the facade Presto asked the assistance of his friend, Louis Sullivan. The project, Sullivan's last, was small compared to the earlier work of the world-renowned architect. Yet Sullivan approached it seriously, with his usual creativity, and the design of the facade reflects the architectural philosophy he had developed throughout that previous work.

Louis Sullivan was in his sixty-fifth year when Presto asked his aid. He had spent a lifetime contributing his originality and inspiration to the commercial architectural style which evolved in Chicago during the 1890s and later came to be called the Chicago school. The Auditorium, the Carson Pirie Scott store, and the Old Chicago Stock Exchange (demolished in 1972) are three of his best-known commercial buildings. Sullivan had gained recognition as a prophet of modern architecture. He had applied his concept of functionalism and his feeling for ornament to the designs of one hundred and twenty-six buildings, but he no longer had any work. The rising popularity of revivalist styles hurt his practice, yet he longed for the opportunity to instruct younger men of his profession on his theories of design. In the last years of his life, Sullivan began setting down his ideas in an autobiography.

In *The Autobiography of an Idea*, Sullivan explains his philosophy of organic architecture. The book is not strictly autobiographical, but rather a discussion of the experiences throughout Sullivan's life which led to his concept of architecture. In an attempt to define architecture with a rule flexible enough to allow for creativity, Sullivan came up with the simple axiom: form follows function. Inherent in this concept are several basic ideas: that a building reveal its structure, and that the building express the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual realities of its function. In a narrow interpretation of functionalism, ornament would be excluded. But Sullivan believed that a building lacking ornament could not fully realize its possibilities. The ornament was to be a part of the building, expressing its reality in creative terms. Sullivan believed that creative activity grew out of experience. Much of the inspiration for his ideas of the organic nature of architecture came from his experience with and love of nature, and hence natural forms are an integral part of the ornament in much of his work.

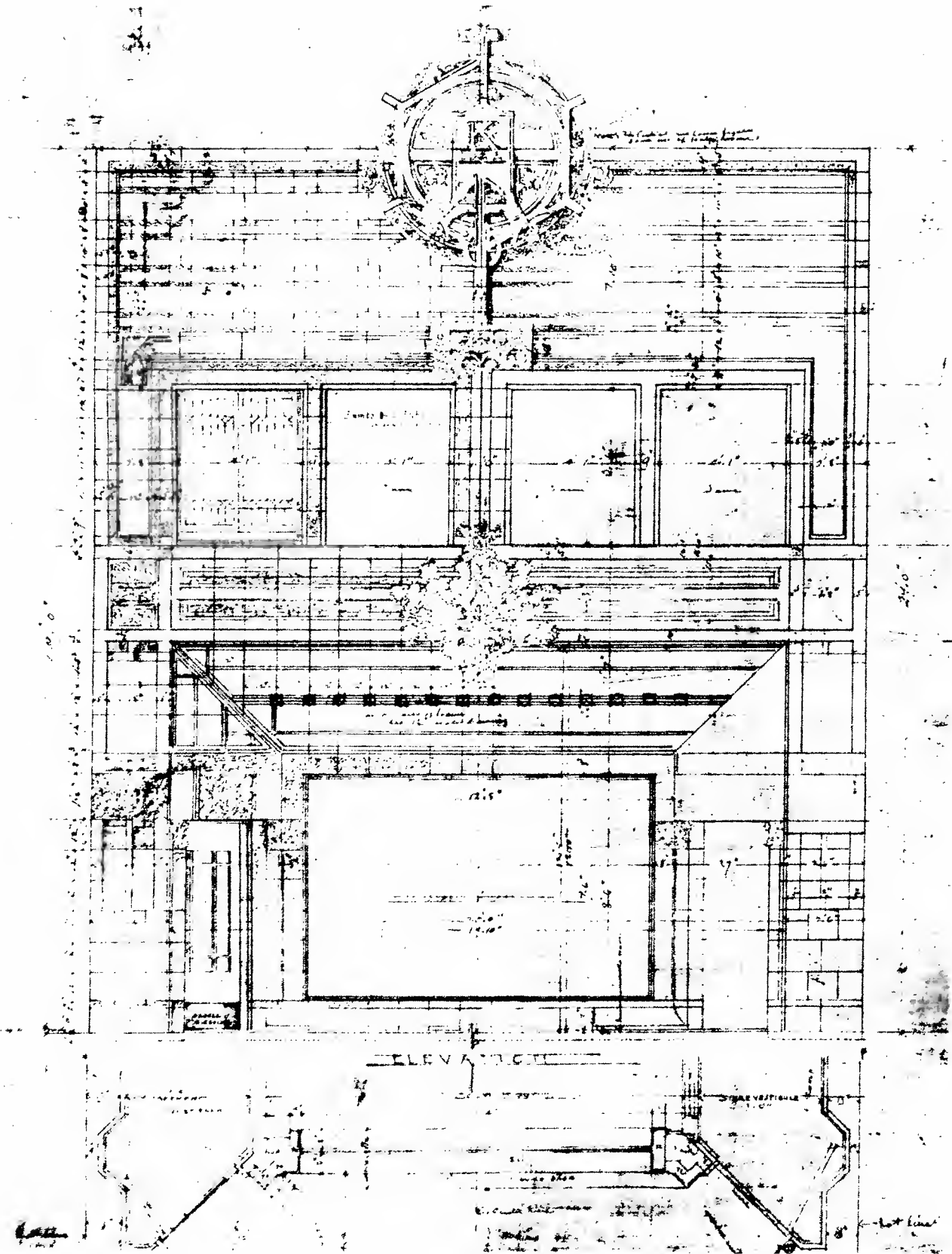
Oil painting of Louis Sullivan, done in 1919 by Frank A. Warner. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society)



A 1922 photograph of Krause Music Store, showing the original windows and doors.

Sullivan and Presto had become acquainted in 1919 when Presto was a draftsman for architect George C. Nimmons's office. During that period Sullivan was at work on several small bank buildings. While in the middle of the seventh and last of the series (the Farmers' and Merchants' Union Bank in Columbus, Wisconsin), Sullivan needed a draftsman and asked Nimmons for the loan of Presto. Presto went to work for Sullivan, and the two men moved to an office Sullivan had rented in a converted residence on Prairie Avenue. Apparently the two architects enjoyed working together on this project and spent many hours over lunches and dinners discussing architecture. When the bank was completed, Sullivan, forced by lack of commissions, let Presto go. While establishing his own practice, Presto continued to admire Sullivan, who had turned to working on his autobiography.

The Krause Music Store was an ideal opportunity for Presto to demonstrate his admiration for Sullivan's architectural ideas. Although small in scale and not one of the aging architect's best-known works, the facade of the Krause Music Store does embody Sullivan's philosophy. Immediately upon Presto's submittal of floor plans for the music store, Sullivan is said to have sketched out a design for the front of the building on the back of an envelope. He later worked out the design in detail, developing it in his own hand into a set of working drawings, a copy of which may be found in the Burnham Library of Chicago's Art Institute.



A portion of Sullivan's working drawings, showing the detailed plans for the facade of Krause Music Store.  
 (Courtesy of Burnham Library, The Art Institute of Chicago)

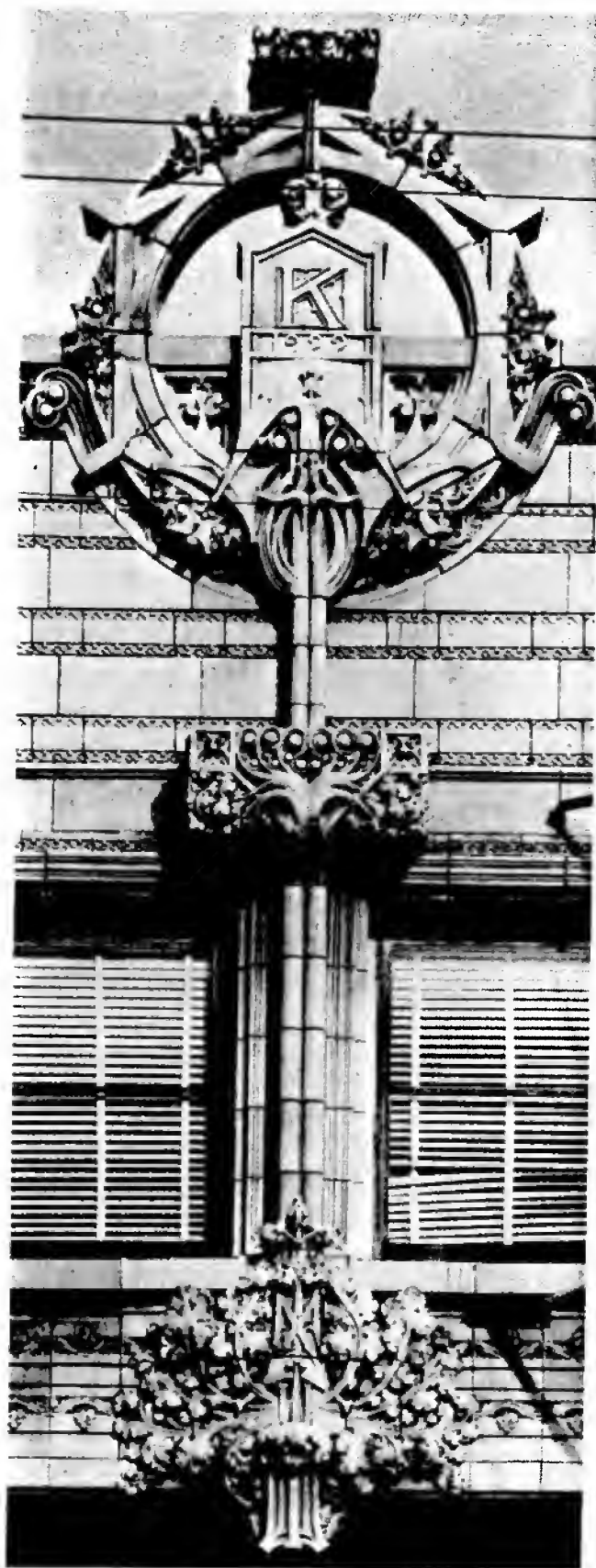
Although it was highly unusual for an architect to design the facade of a building commissioned to another architect, this was not the first collaborative effort in Sullivan's career. In 1898, he designed the facade for 18 South Michigan Avenue, one of the three Gage buildings commissioned to the firm of Holabird and Roche. Sullivan's artistry transformed this straightforward, functional building into a creative work of architecture. The same is true of the Krause Music Store.

As stipulated in the plans, the bilaterally symmetrical facade reaches a height of twenty-eight feet. There are two main entrances: the left to the upstairs apartment, the right to what was originally the store and what is today the funeral home. Both entrances once had wooden doors with glass panels, but they have been replaced by plate-glass doors with gold anodized aluminum frames. The entrances open into vestibules. Between the left vestibule and the apartment stairs are the original wood and glass doors.

The two entrances and a large central window between are set back about three feet from the sidewalk. This was to provide a recessed shelter area for the pedestrian and to attract people to the display window. The sidewalk slopes up to the window and contains a geometric pattern in white, black, and grey tiles. The name Krause is lettered in the tiles, just in front of the window.

The large window at the front was originally a single pane of glass. Today there are three smaller windows set in a gold anodized frame with medium-green rectangular panels above and below. These panels were probably added to the structure around 1960. Originally, on the second story, four casement windows of leaded glass were visible from the street. They can no longer be seen because of double-hung storm windows with Venetian blinds in front of the leaded glass.

The ornamental aspect of the facade of the Krause Music Store is particularly noteworthy. Dominating the facade above the display window and visually dividing the upper portion of the facade in two is a large cartouche, or emblem, which rises vertically through the second story to a height three feet above the roof line. The cartouche is richly modeled in soft green terra cotta, the same material which covers the rest of the facade. The ornament which is found around the doors and windows is subtle in comparison with the elaborate cartouche. Vertical panels of geometric design flank the doors at eye level. A disciplined foliate motif covers the area above the doors and above the first-floor window, where the ornament becomes very dense. Just above the display window, the terra cotta is punctured by tiny carbon-filament light bulbs which set off the display and increase the play of light and shadow on the building's surface. There is a narrow band of ornament running along the bottom of the window and out to the end of the building. The curvilinear motif of the ornament in this band is simplified and repeated in the bands of ornament which decorate the area between the second-floor windows and the roof line. Here the motif is quiet in contrast to that around the display window. This is undoubtedly the accent Sullivan wished to produce, distinguishing between the more lively commercial aspect of the ground floor and the residential nature of the second floor.



Lyrical motifs predominate in the ornament of Krause Music Store. (Barbara Crane, photographer)



Sullivan has been criticized for designing a facade too elaborate for the simple building, a facade which does not seem to grow out of the building but rather is a separate entity placed on the front of the music store. This criticism, based on Sullivan's failure to apply his own philosophy to the design of an appropriate facade, can be somewhat explained by the fact that he had no part in the overall plans. These were in the hands of Presto who designed a straightforward structure. The building is only twenty-five feet wide and sixty-eight feet long with two stories and a basement. The ground floor is supported by steel "I" beams resting on six steel columns running longitudinally through the building. The apartment above is supported on similar beams running between the two brick side walls. This structural system allows for a clear span of open space on the first floor, befitting a store. The space was then divided as needed. The second-floor apartment has a living room at the front of the building. A center hallway leads to the rear of the apartment. Two bedrooms and a dining room can be reached from the hallway on the right, and a closet, bathroom, and kitchen open off the hall to the left. At the rear of the apartment are two porches. It is a compact, functional living space.

Krause moved into the completed building in 1922. Business flourished for the next few years, but his prosperity did not last. Some years later, Krause was found dead in his apartment upstairs, a suicide. Mrs. Krause continued to own the building until 1958 but the store was converted into a funeral home in 1929.

The facade of Krause Music Store is certainly representative of Sullivan's masterly use of ornament. As in his larger commissions, meticulous attention was paid to the decorative elements. George Grant Elmslie, who detailed the ornament on the base of the Carson Pirie Scott store, one of Sullivan's most famous works, noted that the lavish ornament on the base of that store was designed to produce "a richly flowing picture frame...to surround the rich and ornate window displays." The same effect was achieved around the display window in the Krause Music Store. Although the window has been altered, the surrounding ornamental relief remains. Such decorative treatment of the facade was part of the development of Sullivan's theory of organic, functional architecture, and the Krause Music Store facade is a significant last expression of this life-long philosophy.